



West Alameda Neighborhood Association

737 Haight Ave · Alameda, CA 94501 · <http://westalameda.org>

January 14, 2013

To: Members of the Planning Board

Re: Agenda Item #7-A, Planning Board Meeting January 15 2013

Dear President Zuppan, Vice-President Burton, and Board members Henneberry, Knox White, and Köster:

I find it strange to be writing you about a matter concerning the North Park Street area, which is not in West Alameda. However, I wanted to ask your help to prevent a little collateral damage.

Since 2010 our neighborhood association has watched Webster Street's zoning regulations with some interest. Roughly speaking, we'd like to protect the 40 foot height limit on Webster Street.

I appreciate Mr. Thomas's rationale in deleting Policy 2.5.i from the General Plan and relegating the height limit to a specific Zoning Ordinance. Removing Policy 2.5.i does clear up an inconsistency between the Ordinance and the Plan.

However, such a bold stroke has an effect on Webster Street – an effect we believe could be detrimental. The General Plan is a guiding document. A height limit in the General Plan conveys more authority and intent than a limit in a Zoning Ordinance. In our view, the 60 foot limit approved for Park Street in 2000 is a specific *exception* to the guidance in the General Plan, and the documentation should reflect that.

It's true that specific height limits like "35 to 40 feet" seem out of place in a policy document. However, the guiding policy implied by those limits does not exist anywhere else in the Land Use Element. If you delete Policy 2.5.i outright, there is no guidance left to limit building height. (Policy 2.5.b, "maintain their small-city scale and character" is too indirect and is subject to a lot of possible interpretations.) So we would ask for that policy to be replaced by a more appropriate policy.

While you may or may not agree with our views, certainly the issue is beyond the scope of tonight's discussion surrounding the North Park Street part of town. Wouldn't it be less intrusive and less controversial to simply delete the reference to Park Street, and leave Webster Street unaffected?

I ask that you please exercise more care when recommending changes to the General Plan beyond the North Park Street area that concerns you tonight. Thank you,

Travis Wilson, Secretary
West Alameda Neighborhood Association